



## **PATAGONIA FRONTIERS**

A Wilderness Education, Adventure,  
and Nature Conservancy Ranch

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# The Gaucho Way

12-DAY HORSE RIDE  
IN PATAGONIA, CHILE

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Discover a pristine and unknown part of wild Patagonia,  
famed for its untouched natural beauty.

Our wilderness home is located in the Soler Valley along the water's edge of Lago Plomo in the Aysén Region of Patagonia, Chile. The waters of Lago Plomo are the furthest western extension of South America's second largest lake, Lago General Carrera. Our ranches are situated in the center of an immense, wild terrain of crystalline lakes, deep blue rivers, clean mountain streams, broad valleys, ancient forests and spectacular, glaciated peaks. They are sentinel to nearly 2,000 square kilometers of navigable lake waters and a private gateway to a vast mountain topography encompassing surrounding national parks, the Northern Patagonia Icefield and numerous adjacent ranges.

Fill your lungs with fresh, clean air while listening to the natural rhythm of lake waves hitting rocky shores and the soft thumping of horse hooves connecting with the earth. Participate in the custom of sharing mate, a local tea. Enjoy a deliciously prepared meal in community with others. Share a glass of

wine and stories around a campfire. Identify the Southern Cross amongst the night's sparkling stars. Cup your hands in pure, frigid water and enjoy the sweet taste of a mountain brook.

**The Gaucho Way** is our signature route. It follows traditional paths used by the Gauchos, Chilean cowboys who are friends and neighbors. On horseback, they herd cattle to market and return to their homesteads with flour, sugar, yerba mate and other sundries. The Gaucho Way denotes both their passage through the mountain landscape and their distinctive, gracious culture.

The horse is one of the most salient features of everyday rural life and to ride a horse in the vast expanse of wild Patagonia is more than a simple adventure. It is also a chance to become momentarily immersed in the culture of the gauchos, and to be offered a glimpse into one of the most traditional cultures of Chilean society.

Horses in Patagonia are typical of the native Chilean Criollo breed, and Criollo crosses. The Criollo is well known as an even-

tempered, sure-footed mount with good speed and excellent endurance. They are just the horse that is needed for the varied terrain and open space of this frontier region.

We hope that this sample itinerary highlights what this trip offers. Ideally, each trip is best crafted by working together with our guests to best meet their needs. Each trip's length, activity types, and skill level may be adapted to meet a party's goals and desires.

Whether you choose an established itinerary or create one of your own, our commitment is to accommodate your interests and to provide you with a thoroughly enjoyable, safe and memorable experience. We look forward to hosting you at our wilderness ranch home.

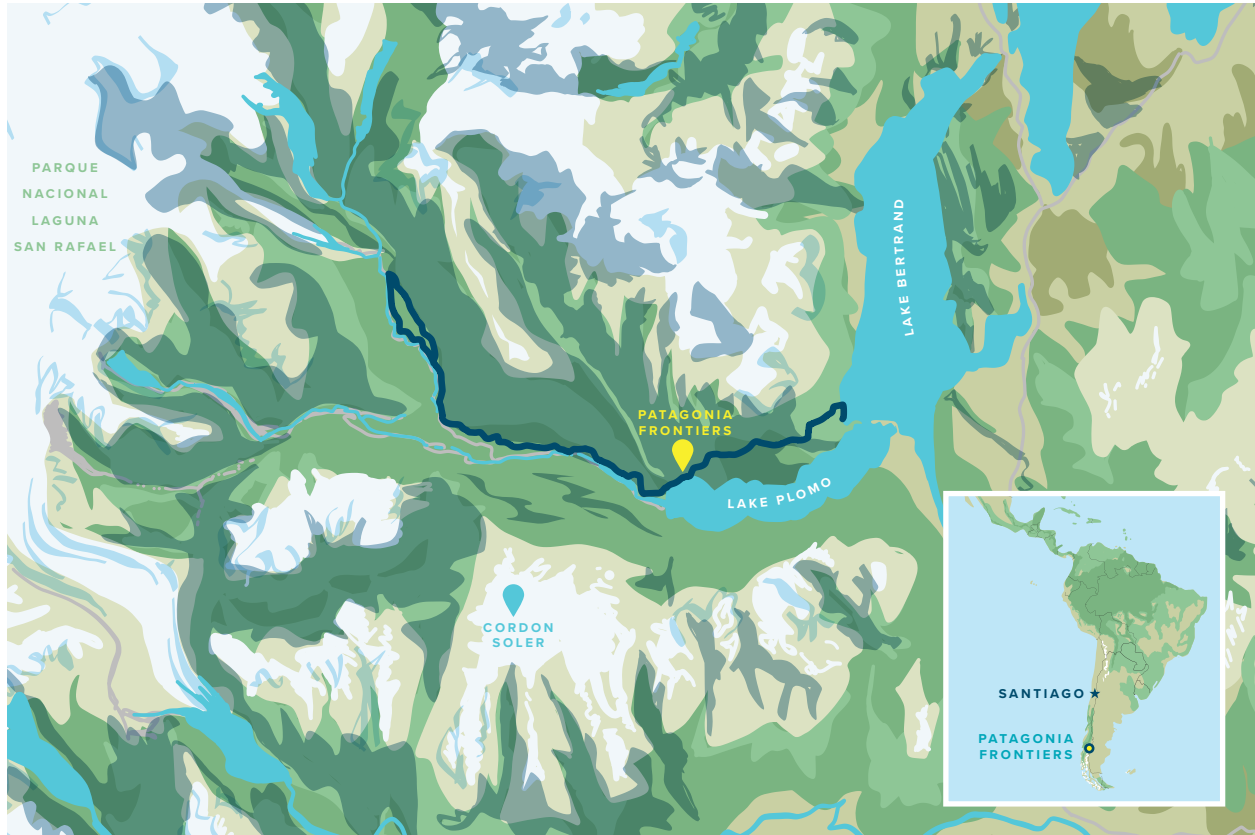
Our connection with the natural world, and who we share it with, is part of what we value most in life.

Princes in US dollars

[\\*See terms and conditions](#)

# The Gaucho Way

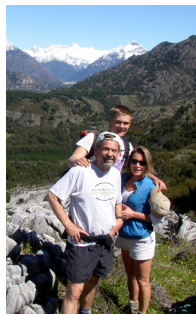
DAY BY DAY AT A GLANCE



Day	Accommodations	Summarized Program	
		Depart country of origin on international flight to Santiago, Chile (SCL).	
1	Local Guest Cabin or Bed and Breakfast	Arrive Santiago. Domestic flight to Balmaceda Regional Airport (BBA). Private transfer to Puerto Tranquilo.	192 km. (4 hours)
2	Local Guest Cabin or Bed and Breakfast	Boat trip to view Marble Chapels. Picnic lunch at Confluencia. Option for day hike or game viewing in Patagonia National Park. Private transfer to Puerto Bertrand.	66-140 km (2-3.5 hours)
3	Tent Camp at Entrada Camp	Full day trek with two brief boat shuttles.	7 km. (4.5 mi.)
4	Guest House, Main Ranch	Full-day trek.	12 km. (7 mi.)
5	Guest House, Main Ranch	Orientation and day ride.	0-18km. (0-11 mi.)
6	Tent Camp at Cacho Ranch	Begin multi-day horse ride.	12 km. (7 mi.)
7	Tent Camp at Glacier Camp	Ride to view Northern Patagonia Icefield.	12-18 km. (7-11 mi.)
8	Tent Camp at Cacho Ranch or alt. camp	Continue ride down valley.	12-18 km. (7-11 mi.)
9	Guest House, Main Ranch	Complete multi-day horse ride.	12-16 km. (7-10 mi.)
10	Guest House, Main Ranch	Day at main ranch. Options for day hike or riding. Traditional Patagonian asado (BBQ).	0-18km. (0-11 mi.)
11	Local Guest Cabin or Bed and Breakfast	Boat shuttle to Puerto Bertrand. Raft the Baker River.	16 km (1 hour boat shuttle.)
12		Private transfer to Balmaceda Regional Airport. Domestic flight to Santiago. Begin international flight.	300 km. (6 hours).
		Arrive final destination.	



# Detailed Itinerary



Depart your country of origin on an international flight to Santiago, Chile (SCL).

## DAY 1

Upon arrival to the Santiago airport (SCL), you transfer to a domestic flight. Your driver will meet you at the regional Balmaceda airport (BBA) where you will continue your journey. You will travel south on the Austral Highway on paved and improved gravel roads. In nearly 200 kilometers of driving you pass just one small village, Villa Cerro Castillo, at the foot of its impressive peak. You will arrive to Puerto Río Tranquilo, a village on the shores of Lago General Carrera, Chile's largest lake, and South America's second largest lake.

After checking in to your accommodations, the evening may be spent relaxing or taking a stroll about the lakeshore and town.

Overnight in Puerto Tranquilo.

**Driving time is approximately four hours.**

## DAY 2

Following breakfast, you will depart by boat to explore the fascinating and labyrinthine intricacies of the Marble Chapel and Marble Cathedral along the lake's coastline towards the south. After the boat tour, your journey continues south, poised between the deep blue waters of the lake and the sharp, snowy peaks flanking the Northern Patagonia Icefield. You will arrive at the tiny hamlet of Puerto Bertrand, located at the headwaters of the Baker River, Chile's largest volume river, a world-class fishery and the centerpiece of a dormant, yet contentious dam-building project by the Spanish Energy Consortium, Endesa.

You will enjoy a picnic lunch with stunning views of the mighty Confluencia, the junction of the Baker and Nef rivers as they thunder over a precipitous drop. We are also close by to the Chacabuco Valley, site of the newly formed Patagonia National Park, an excellent spot for game viewing guanaco, condor, fox and other wildlife.

Overnight in Puerto Bertrand.

**Driving time is approximately three hours.**

## DAY 3

After breakfast and final preparations for your first two days of trekking, you depart mid-morning, taking a short boat shuttle to the start of the hike. The route will follow a trail along the lakeshore and along stock trails, and we will carry daypacks loaded only with essential items. Luggage, equipment, and food will follow by horseback or boat under the care of our horse packers and staff. This allows for exploring and adventure.

**Trekking distance is approximately 7 kilometers (4.3 mi).**

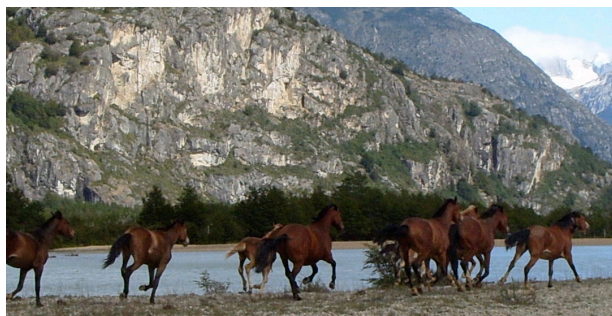
## DAY 4

Today holds a spectacular segment of the trek. Our route will rise up intermittently forested slopes to a high shoulder overlooking the joining of waters between Lago Bertrand and Lago Plomo. These waters connect through a breach in the long, narrow moraine that forms a peninsula separating the two lakes. This short gap clearly demarcates where the deep blue of Lago Bertrand abruptly changes to the jade green of Lago Plomo.

After the trail's initial ascent, you will hike along rocky outcroppings, across high alpine valleys, and through enchanted forests of moss-covered beech trees. The glaciated peaks are at your shoulder and the waters of the lake are below your feet. Keep an eye skyward in search of an Andean condor with its distinctively broad wingspan. As we near the lake's end you view far up the wide Soler Valley floor and beyond to where the afternoon sun stands watch over the enormous expanse of the Patagonia Icefield summits.

Finish the day with a descent past a marble outcropping, sculpted by time and the elements, and walk across forested pasture to the dock, boats, houses and barns of the main ranch, all of which you've been glimpsing from a distance. It will be a long, satisfying day finished with a wholesome meal, a glass of fine Chilean wine, and falling asleep in the rustic, comfortable guest house while listening to the horses' soft grazing on home pasture.

**Trekking distance is approximately 12 kilometers (7 mi.).**



## DAY 5

This morning you will be introduced to some of the ranch's sturdy Criollo mounts and become familiar with the comfortable Gaucho tack. Plan on riding and exploring as you get to know the horses and some of the surrounding terrain.

The horse is one of the most salient features of everyday rural life here and visitors soon notice the ubiquitous mount, saddled and waiting outside each sparsely scattered homestead. Here, the relationship between horse and rider begins early in life. It is no surprise to come across a child atop a horse, riding confidently along a mountain path.

In the evening loads are prepared for panniers and packhorses that will accompany us on the next portion of our trip.

Overnight in the guest house.

Riding distance is approximately 0-18 kilometers (0-11 mi.).

## DAY 6

Begin the day with yerba mate, a bitter tea sipped from a gourd through a metal straw. It is a traditional start to any Patagonia day and important social custom. After a hearty breakfast, the horses are saddled, the packhorses loaded with food and camping gear, and you begin your trek.

The long valleys, lush temperate forests, and mountain peaks offer a wide variety of terrain in which to ride and it's not uncommon to see soaring condors. The varied terrain means that you'll be able to experience everything from craggy mountain trails to long, sandy beaches, and always with a backdrop of the majestic mountain panorama.

Tonight's destination is situated on the banks of the Cacho River at the beginning of another Patagonia Frontiers ranch. This tent camp is located just beyond the intersection of two large valleys facing each other across the Soler Valley floor. This is one of our favorite spots in the valley and we always sense energy here, be it from the massive peaks, the open space, the flowing water, or the pristine landscape. There's contentment here in an evening fire, enjoying good company, and watching the horses graze against a slowly darkening backdrop that reveals southern stars above white, jagged peaks.

Riding distance is approximately 12 kilometers (7 mi.).

## DAY 7

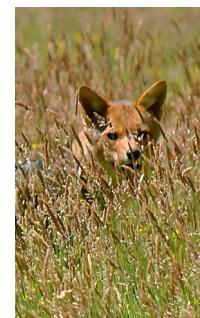
Awake to mate and breakfast around a campfire as you watch the morning's sun slip down from the peak tops to the valley floor. Today, you ride and explore an untouched depth of wild Patagonia that is seldom revealed.

If the day is clear, your views will encompass the surrounding peaks and glaciers, five and six thousand feet in elevation above and the awe-inspiring and formidable Northern Patagonia Icefield, with Cerro Hyades standing firm at the head of the Cacho Valley. The difference in elevation between the valley floor at the far end of our Cacho Ranch and the summit of this colossal peak is 10,000 feet!

Along the way is the old-growth forest of Coigüe, or Dombey's beech, with its elegant branches and thick, lustrous evergreen leaves. The large Magellanic woodpecker is frequently seen or heard here, with its resoundingly deep echo reverberating through the air as it searches for grubs in the ruin of aged trunks. This is also home to the endangered huemul, or South Andean Deer, as well as predators such as Geoffroy's Cat, Patagonian Fox, and Puma. Hidden in plain view, inconspicuous amongst the grandeur of the landscape, is a marble mountainside.

Overnight at the Glacier tent camp.

Riding distance will vary and is approximately 12-18 kilometers (7-11 mi.).



### DAY 8

The night's long song of rumbling ice falls and murmuring tree branches gives way to the crackle of the campfire and early morning calls of the Chucao and Hued-Hued.

Weather, river levels, and the group's pace and energy ultimately influence our route today. If conditions permit, it is possible to reach as far as the massive glacier's edge before continuing towards the Soler Valley.

Perhaps we will have an opportunity to pass by one of our few neighbor's homesteads, subsistence ranches deep in the wilderness, an enclave of human presence and friendly hospitality.

Our tent camp location will be chosen based on conditions.

Riding distance will vary and is approximately 12-18 kilometers (7-11 mi.).

### DAY 9

As the morning sunlight edges toward camp from across the river, you'll sip yerba mate around a fire, and marvel as the light plays over the peaks of snow, ice and rock. There's plenty of time to take in the beauty before packing up camp, saddling and loading the horses, and heading back home down valley. Upon departing, we will travel one of several routes back down the valley to the main ranch.

Overnight in the guest house.

Riding distance is approximately 12-16 kilometers (7-10 mi.).

### DAY 10

Awake in the morning and choose to be leisurely, active or somewhere in between. In the afternoon we enjoy a customary Patagonian barbecue, or asado. Guests, staff and neighbors traditionally all share in this feast of meat, slow-roasted over an open fire, new potatoes, fresh salad from the greenhouse, bread and wine. Don't be surprised if you find yourself staying up late to listen to the strumming of a guitar and a soft, Spanish melody.

Overnight in the guest house.

Riding distance is approximately 0-18 kilometers (0-11 mi.).

### DAY 11

Breathe in the refreshing, cool morning air. Spend the morning taking a stroll along the beach, or through the orchards, gardens and greenhouses. Take a walk in the pasture and share a moment with the horses, or relax as you prepare to say goodbye to the ranch before departing by boat to Puerto Bertrand. The dock there is the departure point for a whitewater rafting descent of the crystal-clear powerhouse that is the Baker River.

Overnight in Puerto Bertrand at a local guest cabin, or bed and breakfast.

### DAY 12

Depart for the Balmaceda airport, home.

Arrive final destination.